

British Early Childhood Practitioners Visited North Carolina Head Start Programs in February 2008!



The NC Head Start-State Collaboration Office (NC HSSCO) orchestrated a week-long meeting between Head Start programs in NC and representatives from England's *SureStart* program in February. *SureStart* is England's comprehensive early childhood program that was created in the late 1990s and modeled after the Head Start program. This meeting marked an historic cooperative exchange between two national comprehensive early childhood programs. The NC HSSCO enlisted the support of the North Carolina Head Start Association [www.ncheadstart.org] to help plan the week-long event.



Khari Garvin, NC HSSCO; Michele Bare, NCHSA; Arthur Martin, Sonia Leigh, John Parkin, and Joanna Smith of *SureStart*; Joseph Laster, OHS Region IV; Christine McKay, *SureStart*; and Lacy Bell, Jr., NCHSA & Sampson County Head Start.

The *SureStart* delegation sought greater understanding of best practice in early care and education as it relates to health and education services for children; partnership-building with families; serving children with special needs; and innovative strategies to blend funds from multiple streams of revenue. At the same time, Head Start programs were presented with the opportunity to learn alternative approaches to the delivery of holistic services to children, as well solutions to growing transportation challenges.

The practitioners visited seven NC Head Start "Programs of Excellence" in five counties including: Cabarrus County BOE Head Start, Community Action Opportunities Head Start, Four County Head

Start, Kannapolis City Schools Head Start, Mountain Area Child and Family Center (Early Head Start), Tribal Child Care Head Start, and Yadkin Valley Economic

Development District Inc. Head Start and Migrant Head Start. The featured sites represented a cross-section of Head Start programs that serve diverse populations with an array of services and program models.

SureStart Senior Children Centre Development Officer John Parkin said of the visit: "The week was incredibly full and stimulating. We received a level of hospitality and welcome unsurpassed from colleagues and now friends

within Head Start. It has been really valuable to observe best practice and enjoy debate in a range of Head Start and Early Head Start programs."



Arthur Martin interacts with child, Buncombe County



Group shot at Dora Reed Children's Center, Cherokee, NC